

The issue is also one of the power of the Congress and the power of the President. Under the Constitution, Presidents may wage war. It is Congress that declares war.

As we know from studying the Constitution in elementary school, high school, college and university, there are approximately 200 conflicts, large and small, that we have been in since 1789 when the First Congress met in New York. In only five of those did Congress declare war, but it certainly gave support to a number of others through appropriations and through authorization.

But that power of the President to wage war is not a mandate to be Super Cop to the world at either the whim or the policy of the President. The question is: "Where is our vital interest?"

Usually the vital interest has been, in most of those 200 engagements, where the lives of citizens of the United States have been involved. Citizens of the United States are not being held captive in Bosnia and the lives of American citizens have not been involved.

We hear Members of the administration saying, "This is not going to be another Vietnam," even though one of the top negotiators at Dayton had a slip of the tongue in talking to a few of us and mentioned Vietnam in the place of where he meant Bosnia. Whether that is significant I leave to the psychoanalysts.

Our troops are on the ground to separate the warring parties, who now are tired, presumably, and want peace after 500 years of acrimony, war, and conflict based on ethnicity as well as on religion. What happens when those supposedly tired warring parties decide they do not want peace anymore and the American forces are in the middle, presumably trying to separate them? The American forces thankfully do have the power to respond, and to respond promptly.

But I worry when a President, any President, Republican or Democrat—and this is a not a new thought with me—does something in foreign affairs in an election year. We all agree that handling foreign affairs is, frankly, a lot easier than dealing with domestic policy and all the different factions there.

The lives of American military men and women are too valuable to be an election year photo opportunity. The President does not have the power to deploy troops anywhere on either whim or long-thought-out policy. It is the Congress that must face up to the issue as to whether the President has the right to deploy troops in the former Yugoslavia, primarily in Bosnia. I would suggest that the President does not have the right. He has not shown us that there is a vital interest in Bosnia for America.

Certainly there is a humanitarian interest. There are dozens of humanitarian interests where people are being butchered by their neighbors in the

same country, be it in Africa, be it in parts of Europe, be it in Asia. We cannot be, as I said earlier, Super Cop to the world. Congress needs to face up to this issue and not duck it as it has been ducking it for the last 2 weeks.

BLATANT POLITICAL DOCUMENTS SENT FROM THE WHITE HOUSE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue regarding a letter that President Clinton and Vice President GORE sent to a number of Federal employees. I was at a hearing last week on the space program and we were receiving testimony from the administrator, Mr. Dan Golden, and one of the members at that hearing brought up the subject of a letter that had been sent to NASA employees in his district that he found particularly offensive. I was very concerned about this particular issue, so I asked for a copy of this letter.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, when I saw this letter, I thought it was a hoax. I thought the President and the Vice President of the United States of America could never be so foolish as to send out to Federal civil service employees an openly and blatantly political document such as this, which is obviously in violation of statute. I had one of my staff call over to the White house to find out for sure, because I thought it was obviously a hoax, as to whether or not the White House had authorized this letter. I was very, very shocked to find out that this, indeed, did come out of the office of the President and was authorized by the Vice President's office.

The letter is entitled "An open letter to Federal employees, from President Clinton and Vice President Gore." It begins with a comment about how proud they are of the work force, and then it goes on to say some nice things about the very good work that our Federal employees do, but then it goes on to talk about the possibility of another Federal shutdown.

It says in the fourth paragraph: "You all know that the law under which most of the government is operating expires on December 15, and the debate that led to the November shutdown is not over," a very true and accurate statement. I agree with it.

Then it goes on to say: "We can't promise you that your jobs and your lives won't be interrupted again. Too much is at stake for America. If you are held hostage again, we know you would not want us to forfeit the Nation's future as ransom."

Mr. Speaker, I think this is an outrage that the President and the Vice President of the United States would send out such a blatantly political document to Federal employees. The Congress of the United States sent to the

President of the United States a continuing resolution to keep the Government open, and the President of the United States decided to veto that continuing resolution, and in him doing so, vetoing that legislation, he shut the Government down. It was quite apparent to me when I heard that he did not talk to the Speaker or the majority leader of the other body on their trip to Israel at all that he was very intent on not negotiating with our side and letting the government shut down.

Indeed, that was the real story behind that lack of dialogue on that trip to Israel, the fact that the President of the United States wanted to go ahead and shut the Government down, and then these two gentlemen have the nerve to turn around and send out such a politically blatant document to Federal employees. I am calling on the chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, the honorable and distinguished gentleman from Florida, [Mr. JOHN MICA] to hold hearings on this subject, because I have since discovered this is not the first time that this has happened. No other President in United States history has ever exploited the Federal work force for political advantage like this President has.

I have in my hands a document that came out of the White House, encouraging all Cabinet Members to solicit political donations from Federal employees, so this President has done it before. He has used his political office of the Presidency of the United States for his political gain. He is doing that again in this letter. I think it is wrong. No Republican President could ever get away with doing anything like this. If a Republican tried something like this, the Washington press corps would be up in arms, there would be calls for investigations, there would be hearings being held.

I am rising today in this House to call upon the Subcommittee on Civil Service to hold hearings on what this President and the Vice President of the United States are doing, politicizing our civil service work force. I could tell you that I have civil service employees in my district who got this letter and they were outraged.

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IMPRISONMENT IS NOT THE ANSWER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GONZALEZ] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, for all of us, this is a holiday season—a time for reflection and renewal. This should most of all be a time to think about possibilities—the possibilities of doing the best we can.

The other day I read a truly grim report: More than a million Americans are in prison. Last year, the rate of growth in prison population was the biggest ever.

Here in the United States, we lock up the biggest percentage of the population of any country in the world. The chances of landing in prison are 8 to 10 times higher here than in other industrial countries. And yet this is a far more dangerous country than most: Violent crime is far worse here than in Canada or Britain or France or Germany. So, clearly, locking people up hasn't made us safer.

In Texas, there are 127,000 people in prison. That's nearly equal to the prison population of the whole United States less than 20 years ago. We also execute more criminals in Texas than in any other State. And yet, I don't think anyone would say that we've turned the corner on crime.

These days, people look at prisons as a way of punishment, and the harsher the better.

Ironically, prisons were invented as a more humane way to treat criminals. Prisons were supposed to replace brutal punishments that left offenders scarred or maimed—punishments that the Constitution calls "cruel and unusual." The idea was to create a penitentiary. The word "penitentiary" was meant to describe a place where the miscreant would be isolated so that he could think about his offense and become penitent. The offender would spend a great deal of time alone, and be trained in a useful occupation. The idea was, in short, not just to punish, but to rehabilitate offenders.

These days, the 19th century idea of penitentiaries is mostly forgotten. And yet, the best run Federal prison today—the one that costs the least to run, the one where there is the least violence among inmates, and the one where the inmates are least likely to become repeat offenders—is run exactly along the lines of the 19th century idea of prison as a tool of reform and rehabilitation. In other words, we actually can compare a humane prison against a brutal one, and we can see the results: the humane prison is cheaper to run and gets effective results; the brutal prison is more costly and only poisons prisoners and communities alike.

Of course, not everyone can be rehabilitated. But in this season of hope and renewal, we ought to think about the growth of prisons, and ask ourselves why we are pouring more and more resources into a system that clearly does not work.

There was a time when people were jailed if they failed to pay their debts. It was a curious and self-defeating thing: a person obviously could not pay a debt while in jail, so debtors' prisons were a burden on everybody: the creditor didn't get paid, the prisoner couldn't pay, and the local government ended up saddled with jails full of honest folks whose only crime was to be in debt.

This got to be a real problem in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland in the year 1742. So the city's government did a wise thing: they commissioned an art-

ist to write a musical piece, hoping that the resulting concert would raise some money to pay off the debts of some of the people who'd been imprisoned for debt.

The composer who got the job was George F. Handel, and in just 26 days he produced the gigantic oratorio, "The Messiah," and it was a great hit: the city raised a great deal of money, paid off the debts of a number of prisoners, and freed them.

Today, it's hard to imagine a city council smart enough to commission a concert to raise money to free prisoners. But we should think about the lesson here: surely there is a better thing to do than make a failing system even worse.

After all, you can't quarrel with the results that the city fathers of Edinburgh got for their trouble: "The Messiah" was an instant success, and it freed prisoners and community alike of a terrible situation. What's more, "The Messiah" is the most performed choral work in history.

If you happen to hear "The Messiah" performed this year, remember it was written because a local government wanted to make some money and free some prisoners.

Maybe we can think about it, and come up with ways to free ourselves of the burden of a prison system which produces far more burdens than it does results. The least we can do in this season of hope and renewal is to ask ourselves why it makes sense to have more and harsher prisons, when the evidence is that prisons that try to rehabilitate prisoners, actually do get results, and are safer and cheaper to run.

Shouldn't we think about the possibilities?

WE SUPPORT OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN BOSNIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to address the issue of Bosnia and to outline the text of a resolution that was introduced yesterday by my colleague on the other side, PAUL MCHALE, and I, both members of the House Committee on National Security.

Mr. Speaker, I have consistently opposed the President's policy on Bosnia and I oppose it today. I voted for the motions to lift the arms embargo because I felt we were not leveling the playing field in that country. We could have prevented many of the atrocities that have occurred there over the past several years, the ones that President Clinton talked to the American people about just a week ago.

I supported the resolution in opposition to the President sending in ground troops. I think it is a grave mistake to put our young people in the midst of this turmoil, and in fact have stated so repeatedly and believe today that we are making a mistake.

However, Mr. Speaker, the President is the Commander in Chief, and has the ability to deploy our troops where he sees fit. Unfortunately, this President, despite votes taken in this body and the other body, overwhelmingly bipartisan, objecting to his policy, has already committed our troops to Bosnia. There is not much we can do about that, Mr. Speaker, and that is unfortunate.

However, Mr. Speaker, we can in fact do something now, and that is what my resolution and the resolution joined by my friend, Mr. MCHALE does. Our resolution acknowledges that this Congress has gone on record repeatedly against inserting ground troops. Our resolution also acknowledges that the President is the Commander in Chief and, as such, can send our troops and deploy them where he wants.

The resolution does state that we in this Congress overwhelmingly support the sons and daughters of America serving in our military who are going to be deployed to Bosnia. But furthermore and perhaps most significantly, what our resolution says is that now that this President has committed our troops, there will be no political second-guessing of the support necessary for them to complete their mission.

The reason why we make this statement, Mr. Speaker, is just a few short years ago when our troops were in Somalia, a request was made by the general in charge of those troops for backup support. We would later find out that that request was denied. When asked why it was denied, the Secretary of Defense at that time, Les Aspin, a friend of mine until he passed away a few short months ago, said that the political climate in Washington was not right to deploy more troops to that theater.

Mr. Speaker, we must never again allow a political decision to decide the fate of our troops. In Somalia, 18 young men and women were killed because we did not provide the adequate backup 1 month after a request was made for additional support. That must not happen in this case and will not happen, because my resolution says that whatever General Joulwan wants in the way of backup, whether it be personnel, whether it be heavy artillery, whether it be air support, or whatever that need is, that there be no political second-guessing from the White House. The DOD and the administration must immediately respond to the request determined by the general in charge of the theater who has been given the responsibility to protect the lives of our kids.

Mr. Speaker, this is the least that we can do to protect our young Americans who are being assigned by this President to go into a hostile area that most of us agree they should not be going to. I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us.

We already have bipartisan support. The numbers are growing. We have been joined by Mr. KENNEDY on the other side, by Mr. CUNNINGHAM on our